

Community Planning and Development 2001 Trends and Issues

Mission.

Our mission is to improve disadvantaged neighborhoods and fund public services and programs through grants management, consolidated and neighborhood planning. This includes funding for affordable housing and economic development activities for low and moderate income persons. Our department also assists with coordination of improvement programs and supports the revitalization of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Montgomery Street Corridor.

Trends and Issues.

Community Planning and Development has three primary functions: 1. Comprehensive community development planning for Savannah's distressed communities. 2. Investment and management of federal and state grants which fund implementation of the community development plan. 3. Coordination of community services.

CPD collaborates with citizens to develop the Consolidated Housing and Community Development (HCD) Plan, which is adopted by City Council as the blueprint for community revitalization. CPD also works with target neighborhoods to develop neighborhood revitalization and redevelopment plans which address livability issues: land use; housing; economic development; infrastructure, capacity building; cultural, recreational and historic resources; and public safety. CPD provides planning assistance to all City bureaus and departments, and allied agencies on a regular basis, including Housing Authority of Savannah, the Metropolitan Planning Commission, the Homeless Authority, and Youth Futures Authority.

CPD administers the City's federal entitlement and competitive community development grant awards from the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U. S. Department of Commerce and Economic Development Administration. It guides implementation of the City's Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan through allocation and management of federal and state grants to fund implementation activities. Projects administered with these funds include affordable homeownership and rental housing, housing rehabilitation, public facility development, infrastructure improvements, community-based neighborhood improvement projects, economic development, development of neighborhood organizations, and basic services to low-income and homeless persons.

Funding for many of these implementation projects is provided through grants to other agencies. CPD monitors these agencies to ensure compliance with federal regulations and to assure appropriate use of the grant funds. CPD works to secure additional funds for the community through development of grant applications, collaboration and support of partner agencies on applications for which they are eligible, and information and referral on grant opportunities for community development partners.

The major trends impacting CPD in 2001, and which will continue to impact the department in 2002, are:

Increased involvement by community-based development organizations. The expansion of grant programs for Community-Based Development Organizations - the Grants for Neighborhoods Program will make community-based development organizations (CBDOs) major partners and developers of their neighborhoods. CPD will continue to provide ongoing training and technical assistance to eligible CBDOs to enable them comply with pertinent HUD regulations. The new program will create a need to reallocate funds away from traditional community development partners toward community-based organizations, and result in more intense competition for the dollars which will remain.

Continuing federal legislative climate which threatens to curtail entitlement funds. In 2001 the City's allocation of CDBG was increased from the 2000 levels. HOME (affordable housing) fund also increased, and Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) funds increased slightly. The federal 2002 budget is anticipated to remain at the 2001 level. Should CDBG funds be reduced, City and agency service levels will be impacted.

Competitive Grant management. The City of Savannah continues to be successful in applying for competitive grants that fund specific implementation projects of the HCD Plan and leverage private investment. However, the staffing needs for management of these funds can be complex. Management strategies which maximize existing staff resources must be developed to assure continued effective management of these resources.

Land Use/Zoning Conflicts and the impact of Growth Management in target neighborhoods. The growing land use and zoning conflicts in the CDBG-Target Area, and MPC's proposed 2002 initiation of major update of the City's State-mandated Comprehensive Plan and proposed revision of the City's Zoning Ordinance will impact CPD operation. The state's growth management laws will continue to impact City's neighborhoods, including CDBG target neighborhoods, by increasing interest in urban development. The Growth Management laws will increase the collaborative planning efforts already under way, by requiring planning among jurisdictions.

2003 - 2007 HCD Plan: Effort is underway to produce a new Neighborhood Analysis Report designed to measure service levels in City neighborhoods. This project will impact Community Planning activities because staffing needs are inadequate. This issue is further compounded by the fact that HUD-mandated 2003 - 2007 Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan is due on November 12, 2002. The City's 2001-2002 Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan will expire on December 31, 2002, clearing the way for a new 2003-2007 planning process to begin. Additional resources will be needed to develop and retain existing planning staff, and fill vacant positions.

2000 Census. The results of the 2000 census indicated the City lost 6,050 or 4.4% of its population. This may affect the entire CPD effort. Grant awards are based on census information, and neighborhoods are determined to be eligible for CDBG-funded improvements based on the number of eligible residents in each neighborhood as determined by the Census.

Administrative funding for the community planning and community development divisions of the CPD is presently being derived from CDBG, HOME and General Funds. CDBG fund is capped, by legislation, at 20% of the CDBG budget. HOME funds are capped at 10% of the HOME budget. In 2002, the full 20% of the CDBG and 10% of the HOME funds will be spent for administrative cost. Administrative cost has remained constant for the last two years, with revenue increasing by approximately 3%. Also, the allocation of General Funds to CPD budget has freed more CDBG funds for housing projects.